

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 12, 2012

Agenda Item: Ear Mountain WMA grazing lease renewal – Gollehon Ranch

Division: Fish & Wildlife, Wildlife Bureau **Action Needed:** Approval of Final Rule/Action

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

Beginning in 1992, a rest-rotation grazing system was established with the Gollehon Ranch for the 960-acre north pasture of Ear Mountain WMA in order to improve vegetative quality on the WMA. The proposed action is directed at helping to maintain the vigor of vegetation on the Ear Mountain WMA for the benefit of wildlife. Year-round and seasonal forage for mule deer and bighorn sheep and other big game will be maintained. Public hunting access on the lessee's property will also be incorporated within the grazing lease.

Public Involvement Process & Results

In March 2009, FWP Region 4 issued a draft environmental assessment and solicited public comment for the proposed Ear Mountain Wildlife Management Grazing Agreement with the Gollehon Ranch. One public comment was taken regarding the effects of grazing on non-hybridized westslope cutthroat that are present in the North Fork Willow Creek located within this pasture. Based on the draft grazing management plan we determined that grazing would not have a significant impact on the riparian habitat and westslope cutthroat population. No changes have occurred to the system or affected environment since 2009 and an amended Decision Notice has been adopted, contingent on commission Approval.

Alternatives and Analysis

The alternative would be to not use the grazing management plan on the Ear Mountain WMA. Lower quality and less abundant forage production on WMA would be expected over the long-term. The Gollehon Ranch would be required to find additional grazing pasture elsewhere.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP Region 4 would implement a grazing plan on the WMA. The plan would use cattle grazing as a management tool to maintain vegetative quality on the WMA by stimulating re-growth of native grasses and forbs for the benefit of wildlife. The Gollehon Ranch would benefit from the availability of early and late summer pasture for their cattle. Public hunting would be allowed through the grazing agreement on the lessee's property.

Proposed Motion

I move to renew the Ear Mountain WMA rotational grazing system agreement with the Gollehon Ranch for the 2012 – 2014 period.